

QUESTION 27

The Sanctification of the Blessed Virgin

After what has gone before, in which we treated matters concerning the union of God and man and what follows upon that union (questions 1-26), it remains to consider those things that the incarnate Son of God did or underwent in the human nature united to Him (questions 27-59). This consideration will have four parts. First, we will consider those things that pertain to His entry into the world (questions 26-39); second, we will consider those things that pertain to the progression of His life in this world (questions 40-45); third, we will consider those things that pertain to His departure from this world (questions 46-52); and, fourth, we will consider those things that pertain to His exaltation after this life (questions 53-59).

In the first part we have to consider, first, the conception of Christ (questions 27-34); second, His birth (questions 35-36); third, His circumcision (question 37); and, fourth, His baptism (questions 38-39).

As regards His conception, we have to consider certain matters regarding , first, the mother who conceived Him (questions 27-30); second, regarding the manner of His conception (questions 31-33); and, third, regarding the perfection of the child who was conceived (question 34).

There are four things that have to be considered regarding His mother: first, her sanctification (question 27); second, her virginity (question 28); third, her espousal (question 29); fourth, her annunciation, i.e., the preparation for her conceiving (question 30).

On the first topic there are six questions: (1) Was the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, sanctified before her birth from the womb? (2) Was she sanctified before her ensoulment (*ante animationem*)? (3) Was the stimulant to sin (*fomes peccati*) totally removed from her by this sanctification? (4) Did it follow from this sanctification that she never sinned? (5) Did she attain to the fullness of grace by this sanctification? (6) Was it peculiar to her to have been sanctified in this way?

Article 1

Was the Blessed Virgin sanctified before her birth from the womb?

It seems that the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth from the womb (*beata virgo non fuerit sanctificata ante nativitatem ex utero*):

Objection 1: In 1 Corinthians 15:46 the Apostle says, “What is spiritual is not first; instead, what is first is animal, then what is spiritual.” But it is through sanctifying grace that a man is born spiritually as a son of God—this according to John 1:13 (“They are born ... of God”). But birth from the womb is an animal birth. Therefore, it is not the case that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified prior to being born from the womb.

Objection 2: In *Epistola ad Dardanum* Augustine says, “Sanctification, by which we build the temple of God, belongs only to those who have been reborn.” But no one is reborn before he is born. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before she was born from the womb.

Objection 3: Anyone who is sanctified by grace is cleansed of original sin and actual sin. Therefore, if the Blessed Virgin had been sanctified before her birth from the womb, it would follow that she was then cleansed of original sin. But only original sin could have kept her from entering the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, if she had died then, it seems that she would have entered the gates of the heavenly kingdom. Yet she could not have done this before the passion of Christ—this according to the Apostle in Hebrews 10:19 (“We have confidence in entering the Holies through His blood”). Therefore, it seems that the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before she was born from the womb.

Objection 4: Original sin is contracted from one’s origin, just as actual sin is contracted by one’s

act. But as long as one endures in the act of sinning, he cannot be cleansed from actual sin. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin likewise could not have been cleansed of original sin while she was still in the very act of her origin, existing in her mother's womb.

But contrary to this: The Church celebrates the nativity of the Blessed Virgin. But a feast is not celebrated in the Church except for someone who is holy. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin was holy at her birth itself. Therefore, she had been sanctified in the womb.

I respond: Concerning the sanctification of blessed Mary, viz., that she was sanctified in the womb, there is nothing handed down in the canonical Scriptures, which likewise do not make mention of her birth (*nativitas*). But just as Augustine argues reasonably in *De Assumptione Virginis* that she was assumed into heaven with her body, which the Scriptures nonetheless do not hand down, so, too, we can reasonably argue that she was sanctified in the womb.

For it is reasonable to think that she who gave birth to “the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth” (John 1:14), received greater privileges of grace than all others. Hence, in Luke 1:28 we read that the angel said to her, “Hail, full of grace.” Now we find that in the case of certain others it was granted by way of privilege to be sanctified in the womb—for instance, Jeremiah, to whom it is said in Jeremiah 1:5, “Before you came forth from the womb, I sanctified you,” and John the Baptist, of whom it is said in Luke 1:15, “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.” Hence, it is reasonable to think that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before she was born from the womb.

Reply to objection 1: Even in the case of the Blessed Virgin what is animal was first and, after that, what is spiritual. For she was first conceived according to the flesh and afterwards sanctified according to the spirit.

Reply to objection 2: Augustine is speaking here according to the general law, in keeping with which individuals are not reborn through the sacraments without first being born. But God does not tie His power to this law of the sacraments without being able to confer grace on certain individuals, by a special privilege, before they are born from the womb.

Reply to objection 3: The Blessed Virgin was sanctified in the womb from original sin as regards the *personal* stain [of sin], but she was not liberated from the guilt by which the *whole nature* was held liable to punishment (*a reatu quo tota natura tenebatur obnoxia*), with the result that she enters into paradise *only through Christ's sacrifice*—in the same way that this is likewise said of the holy patriarchs who lived before Christ.

Reply to objection 4: Original sin is drawn from one's origin in the sense that what is communicated through the origin is human nature, which original sin has properly to do with. This occurs when the conceived child is ensouled. Hence, after ensoulment there is nothing to prevent a conceived child from being sanctified, since after this time the child remains in his mother's womb not in order to receive human nature, but for the sake of bringing the nature that he has already received to completion in a certain way.

Article 2

Was the Blessed Virgin sanctified before her ensoulment?

It seems that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before her ensoulment (*beata virgo sanctificata fuit ante animationem*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), more grace was conferred on the Virgin Mother of God

than on any of the saints. But it seems to have been granted to some individuals to be sanctified before their ensoulment. For Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you,” whereas the soul is not infused before the formation of the body. Similarly, in *Super Lucam* Ambrose says of John the Baptist, “The spirit of life was not yet in him, and yet the Spirit of grace was already in him.” Therefore, *a fortiori*, the Blessed Virgin could have been sanctified before her ensoulment.

Objection 2: As Anselm explains in *De Conceptu Virginali*, it was fitting “that the Virgin should shine with a purity greater than which, under God, none can be conceived.” Hence, in Cantic of Canticles 4:7 it says, “You are wholly beautiful, my love, and there is no blemish in you.” But the Blessed Virgin would have a greater purity if she were never stained by the contagion of original sin. Therefore, it was granted to her to be sanctified before her flesh was ensouled.

Objection 3: A feast is celebrated only for one who was holy. But there are those who celebrate the feast of the conception of the Blessed Virgin. Therefore, it seems that she was holy at her very conception. And so it seems that she was sanctified before her ensoulment.

Objection 4: In Romans 11:16 the Apostle says, “If the root is holy, so are the branches.” But the roots of children are their parents. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin could have been sanctified even in her parents, before her ensoulment.

But contrary to this: Things that existed in the Old Testament are figures of the New Testament—this according to 1 Corinthians 10:11 (“All things happened to them in figures”). Now by the sanctification of the tabernacle, of which Psalm 45:5 says, “The Most High has sanctified His own tabernacle,” what seems to be signified is the sanctification of the Mother of God, who is called the ‘tabernacle’ of God—this according to Psalm 18:6 (“He has set His tabernacle in the sun”). But Exodus 40:31-32 says of the tabernacle, “After everything was completed, the cloud covered the tabernacle of the testimony and the glory of the Lord filled it.” Therefore, the Blessed Virgin was likewise not sanctified until after everything belonging to her was completed, viz., her body and her soul.

I respond: The sanctification of the Blessed Virgin cannot be understood to precede her ensoulment, and this for two reasons:

First, because the sanctification of which we are talking is nothing other than being cleansed of original sin; for as Dionysius explains in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 12, sanctity is “a complete cleansing (*perfecta munditia*).” But guilt can be cleansed only by grace, the subject of which is a rational creature alone. And so the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before the infusion of the rational soul.

Second, because, since only a rational creature is susceptible to guilt, before the infusion of the rational soul the conceived child is not guilty of sin (*culpa obnoxia*). And so in whatever way the Blessed Virgin might have been sanctified before her ensoulment, she would never have incurred the stain of original sin. And so she would not have needed the redemption and salvation that comes through Christ, of which Matthew 1:21 says, “He will save His people from their sins.” But it is unfitting for Christ not to be “the savior of all men,” as 1 Timothy 4:10 says.

Hence, it follows that the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin came after her ensoulment.

Reply to objection 1: The Lord says that He *knew* Jeremiah before his formation in the womb, viz., by His knowledge of predestination, but He says that He *sanctified* him “before he left the womb” (Jeremiah 1:5), not before he was formed.

Now what Ambrose says, viz., that the “spirit of life” was not yet in John the Baptist when he already had the Spirit of grace, should be understood not in such a way that ‘spirit of life’ means the vivifying soul, but in such a way that ‘spirit’ means air that is breathed externally. Alternatively, one can reply that the spirit of life, i.e., the soul, was not yet in him with its manifest and complete operations.

Reply to objection 2: If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never been stained by the contagion of original sin, this would detract from Christ’s dignity, according to which He is the universal savior of

everyone. And so after Christ, who, as the universal savior, did not need to be saved, the purity of the Blessed Virgin was the greatest. For Christ did not in any way contract original sin, but in His very conception He was holy—this according to Luke 1:35 (“The holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God”). But the Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin; however, it had been cleansed from her before she was born from the womb. And this is signified in Job 3:9, where it is said of the night of original sin, “Let it expect light,” i.e., Christ, “and not see it” (because “no defiled thing comes into it,” as Wisdom 7:25 says), “nor the rising of the dawning of the day,” that is, the rising of the Blessed Virgin, who in her rising was immune from original sin.

Reply to objection 3: Even though the Roman church does not celebrate the conception of the Blessed Virgin, it does nonetheless tolerate the custom of some churches that celebrate this feast. Hence, such a celebration is not to be totally disapproved of. Yet neither is it the case that through this celebrated feast of her conception one is given to understand that she was holy at her conception. Instead, since it is not known exactly when (*quo tempore*) she was sanctified, what is celebrated on the day of her conception is the feast of her sanctification rather than the feast of her conception.

Reply to objection 4: There are two sorts of sanctification:

One is the sanctification *of the whole nature*, insofar as the whole of human nature is liberated from every corruption of sin and punishment. This will take place at the resurrection.

The other is *personal* sanctification. This does not pass into one’s carnally conceived child, since this sort of sanctification has to do with the mind and not with the flesh. And so even if the parents of the Blessed Virgin had been cleansed of original sin, the Blessed Virgin would still have contracted original sin, since she was conceived according to concupiscence of the flesh and from the intercourse of man and woman. For in *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia* Augustine says, “All flesh born of carnal intercourse is in sin.”

Article 3

Was the Blessed Virgin cleansed of the infection of the stimulant [to sin]?

It seems that the Blessed Virgin was not cleansed of the infection of the stimulant [to sin] (*beata virgo non fuerit emundata ab infectione fomitis [peccati]*):

Objection 1: Just as one punishment for original sin is the stimulant [to sin] (*fomes peccati*), which consists in the rebellion of the lower powers against reason, so, too, death, along with other types of bodily suffering, is likewise a punishment for original sin. But the Blessed Virgin was subject to sufferings of this latter sort. Therefore, the stimulant [to sin] was likewise not removed from her.

Objection 2: 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, “Virtue is perfected in weakness,” and it is talking about the weakness that belongs to the stimulant [to sin], by reason of which [the Apostle] suffered from “a sting of the flesh” (12:7). But nothing that is relevant to the perfection of virtue was to be taken away from the Blessed Virgin. Therefore, the stimulant to sin was not to be taken away totally from the Blessed Virgin.

Objection 3: Damascene says that, in the case of the Blessed Virgin, “the Holy Spirit came upon her to purify her” [just] prior to her conceiving the Son of God. But this can only be understood to be a purification from the stimulant [to sin], since, as Augustine explains in *De Natura et Gratia*, she did not commit sin. Therefore, by her sanctification in the womb she was not totally cleansed of the stimulant [to sin].

But contrary to this: Canticle of Canticles 4:7 says, “You are wholly beautiful, my love, and there is no blemish in you.” But the stimulant [to sin] involves a blemish, at least a blemish of the flesh.

Therefore, the stimulant [to sin] did not exist in the Blessed Virgin.

I respond: On this matter there are diverse opinions. For some have claimed that, in the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin by which she was sanctified in the womb, the stimulant [to sin] was totally removed, whereas others claim that the stimulant [to sin] remained insofar as it makes for difficulty in doing what is good, but was removed insofar it makes for a tendency toward what is bad. Still others claim that the stimulant [to sin] was removed insofar as it involves corruption of the *person* by impelling the person toward what is bad and making for difficulty in doing what is good, but that it remained insofar as it involves the corruption of the *nature*, viz., as a cause of passing original sin on to offspring. Some others claim that in the first sanctification the stimulant [to sin] remained in its *essence*, but that it was *bound fast* (*ligatus fuit*), whereas in the very conception of the Son of God it was totally removed.

In order to understand these opinions, one must take into account that the stimulant [to sin] is nothing other than disordered desire in the sentient appetite (*inordinata concupiscentia sensibilis appetitus*)—but disordered *habitual* desire, since *actual* disordered desire is a sinful movement (*actualis concupiscentia est motus peccati*). Now sentient desire is said to be disordered insofar as it conflicts with reason, and this occurs insofar as it inclines one toward what is bad or makes for difficulty in doing what is good. And so it belongs to the very *nature* of the stimulant [to sin] that it inclines one toward what is bad or makes for difficulty in doing what is good (*ad ipsam rationem fomitis pertinet quod inclinet ad malum vel difficultatem facit in bono*). Hence, to claim that the stimulant [to sin] remained in the Blessed Virgin without inclining her to what is bad is to posit two opposites. Similarly, it seems to imply opposites to claim that the stimulant [to sin] remains insofar as it involves the corruption of the *nature* but not insofar as it involves the corruption of the *person*. For according to Augustine in *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, it is lust that transmits original sin to offspring. But lust involves disordered sentient desire (*inordinatam concupiscentiam*), which is not totally subject to reason. And so if the stimulant [to sin] were totally removed insofar as it involves the corruption of the *person*, then it could not remain insofar as it involves the corruption of the *nature*.

What remains is for us to claim either that (a) the stimulant [to sin] was totally removed through the first sanctification or that (b) it was bound fast:

(a) Now it might be thought that the stimulant [to sin] was *totally removed* in the sense that it was granted to the Blessed Virgin, by the abundance of the grace descending upon her, that the disposition of the powers of soul in her were such that the lower powers never moved without the judgment of reason—just as, in the way explained above (q. 15, a. 2), this occurred in the case of Christ, who, it is clear, did not have the stimulant [to sin], and just as, in the case of Adam, it occurred through original justice before his sin. The result would be that, in this regard, the grace of sanctification in the Virgin had the force of original justice.

Yet even though this position seems to be relevant to the dignity of the Virgin Mother, it nonetheless detracts in some way from the dignity of Christ, without whose power no one is freed from the first condemnation. And even though, through faith in the Christ, certain individuals [who lived] before Christ's incarnation were, according to the *spirit*, freed from that condemnation, it nonetheless does not seem to have been fitting that any one should be freed from that condemnation according to the *flesh* until after His Incarnation, when it was first fitting for immunity from condemnation to have become apparent. And just as before the immortality of the flesh of the risen Christ no one attained to immortality of the flesh, so it seems likewise inappropriate to claim that prior to the flesh of Christ, in which there was no sin, the flesh of his Virgin Mother—or of anyone else—existed without the stimulant [to sin], which is called the law of the flesh, or of its members (see Romans 7:23-25).

(b) And so it seems better to reply that through the Virgin's sanctification in the womb the stimulant [to sin] was not removed from her in its *essence*, but remained *bound fast*—(i) not, to be sure,

by an act of her own reason, as in the case of holy men, since she did not immediately have the use of reason when she was in her mother's womb, for this was a special privilege of Christ's, but instead (ii) through an abundant grace that she received in being sanctified and, even more perfectly, through God's providence keeping her sentient appetite from all disordered movements. However, afterwards, in the very conception of Christ's flesh, in which it was fitting for the immunity from sin to first shine forth, one should accept on faith that the total removal of the stimulant [to sin] flowed over from the child into His mother. And this is signified in Ezechiel 43:2, where it is said, "Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came in by the way of the East"—that is, through the Blessed Virgin—"and the earth"—that is, her flesh—"shone with His majesty"—that is, with Christ's majesty."

Reply to objection 1: Death and sufferings of the sort in question do not of themselves incline one toward sin. Hence, although even Christ Himself took on sufferings of this sort, He did not take on the stimulant [to sin]. Hence, likewise, in the case of the Blessed Virgin, in order that she might be conformed to her Son, "of whose plenitude [she] received grace (John 1:16), the stimulant [to sin] was first bound fast and later removed, but she was not freed from death and other sufferings of the sort in question.

Reply to objection 2: The weakness of the flesh involving the stimulant [to sin] is, to be sure, an occasion of perfect virtue in holy men, but it is not a cause without which perfection cannot be had. Now in the case of the Blessed Virgin, it is sufficient to posit perfect virtue and an abundance of grace, and it is not necessary to posit in her every sort of occasion of perfection.

Reply to objection 3: The Holy Spirit effected a twofold purification in the Blessed Virgin.

One was a sort of preparation for conceiving Christ, and this was not a purification from any impurity belonging to sin or the stimulant [to sin], but was instead a purification that gave her mind a unity of focus and took multiplicity away from it (*sed mentem eius in unum colligens et a multitudine sustollens*). For as Dionysius explains in *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, the angels are likewise said to be purified, and no impurity is found in them.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit effected another purification in her by means of Christ's conception, which was a work of the Holy Spirit. And on this score one can say that He purified her totally of the stimulant [to sin].

Article 4

Was the Blessed Virgin preserved from every actual sin by her sanctification in the womb?

It seems that the Blessed Virgin was not preserved from every actual sin by her sanctification in the womb (*per sanctificationem in utero non fuerit beata virgo praeservata ab omni peccato actuali*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 3), after the first sanctification the stimulant to sin remained in the Virgin. But a movement of the stimulant to sin, even if it precedes the act of reason, is a venial sin, even if a "very small one," as Augustine puts it in *De Trinitate*. Therefore, in the Blessed Virgin there was some venial sin.

Objection 2: Commenting on Luke 2:35 ("Your own soul a sword shall pierce") in *De Quaestionibus Novi et Veteris Testamenti*, Augustine says, "At the death of our Lord the Blessed Virgin doubted with a sort of numbness." But it is a sin to doubt something that belongs to the Faith. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin was not preserved immune from every sin.

Objection 3: In *Super Matthaicum*, while commenting on Matthew 12:47 ("Behold, your mother and your brethren are standing outside, asking for you"), Chrysostom says, "It is clear that they were

doing this only out of vainglory.” And in commenting on John 2:3 (“They have no wine”), the selfsame Chrysostom says, “She wished to do them a favor and to raise herself in their esteem through her Son. And perhaps she succumbed to human frailty, just as His brethren did when they said, ‘Show Yourself to the world.’” And a few lines later he adds, “For she did not yet have the opinion of Him that was necessary.” But it is clear that all this is sinful. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin was not preserved immune from every sin.

But contrary to this: In *De Natura et Gratia* Augustine says, “Because of the honor that belongs to Christ, I wish to raise no question at all concerning the holy Virgin Mary when the talk is about sin. For we know that so much grace was bestowed upon her to conquer sin in every way that she merited to conceive and give birth to Him who clearly had no sin.”

I respond: God prepares and disposes those whom He chooses for some role in such a way that they are rendered fit for the role for which they are chosen—this according to 2 Corinthians 3:6 (“He has made us fit ministers of the New Testament”).

Now the Blessed Virgin was divinely chosen to be the Mother of God. And so there should be no doubt that by His grace God rendered her fit for this role—this according to what the angel says to her [in Luke 1:30] (“You have found favor with God ... Behold, you shall conceive ...”). But she would not have been a fit mother of God if she had ever sinned.

First, because the honor of parents redounds upon their offspring—this according to Proverbs 17:6 (“Their parents (*patres*) are the glory of children”). Hence, conversely, the shame of the Mother would have redounded upon her Son.

Second, because she had a singular affinity to Christ, who received His flesh from her. But 2 Corinthians 6:15 says, “What agreement does Christ have with Belial?”

Third, because the Son of God, who is the wisdom of God, lived within her in a singular manner, not only in her soul but in her womb. But Wisdom 1:4 says, “Wisdom will not enter into a malevolent soul or live in a body subject to sin.”

And so it should be declared, absolutely speaking, that the Blessed Virgin committed no actual sin, either mortal or venial, so that what is said in Canticle of Canticles 4:7 is fulfilled: “You are wholly beautiful, my love, and there is no blemish in you.”

Reply to objection 1: To be sure, the stimulant [to sin] remained in the Blessed Virgin after her sanctification in the womb, but it was bound fast, lest it should burst forth into some disordered movement that would precede the act of reason. And even if the grace of sanctification contributed to this, it was nonetheless not sufficient for it; otherwise, by virtue of that grace it would have been granted to her that it was *impossible* for there to be any movement of her sentient appetite that was not prevented by reason, and so she would not have had the stimulant to sin—which is contrary to what was said above (a. 3). Hence, one must say that a complement to the binding [of the stimulant to sin] came from God’s providence, which did not permit any disordered movement to come forth from the stimulant [to sin].

Reply to objection 2: Regarding the words of Simeon [in Luke 2:35], Origen and certain other doctors expound them as having to do with the sorrow experienced [by the Blessed Virgin] during the passion of Christ.

Ambrose, on the other hand, claims that what is signified by the sword is “Mary’s prudence, which took note of the heavenly mystery. For the word of God is ‘living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword’ (Hebrews 4:12).”

However, some understand the sword to signify doubt or hesitation (*dubitationem*). However, this should be understood to be a hesitation springing from admiration and investigation, and not a hesitation springing from unbelief. For in *Epistola ad Optimum* Basil says, “The Blessed Virgin, while standing by the cross and observing every detail was—after the message of Gabriel and the ineffable knowledge of the divine conception, after the wondrous manifestation of His miracles—fluctuating back and forth,”

that is, on the one hand, seeing Him suffer injustices*, and, on the other hand, thinking about His wondrous works.

Reply to objection 3: Chrysostom went too far in these words.

Still, [the passage from Matthew] could be expounded as meaning that what our Lord was keeping in check was not a disordered movement of vainglory in [His mother] as regards herself, but instead what others might be thinking.

Article 5

Did the Blessed Virgin, by her sanctification in the womb, obtain the fullness or perfection of grace?

It seems that the Blessed Virgin, by her sanctification in the womb, did not obtain the fullness or perfection of grace (*beata virgo per sanctificationem in utero non obtinuerit gratiae plenitudinem sive perfectionem*):

Objection 1: [Fullness of grace] seems to involve a privilege that belongs to Christ (*videtur pertinere ad privilegium Christi*)—this according to John 1:14 (“We have seen [His glory] as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth”). But what is peculiar to Christ should not be attributed to anyone else. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin did not receive the fullness of grace in her sanctification.

Objection 2: What is full and perfect or complete (*quod est plenum et perfectum*) leaves no room for anything to be added, since, as Physics 3 says, “What is perfect or complete is not lacking in anything.” But the Blessed Virgin did afterwards receive an addition to her grace, when she conceived Christ—for Luke 1:35 says, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you”—and, again, when she was assumed into glory. Therefore, it seems that she did not have the fullness of grace in her first sanctification.

Objection 3: As *De Caelo et Mundo* 1 says, “God does nothing in vain.” But she would have had certain graces in vain, since she never made use of them (*cum earum usum nunquam exercuerit*). For we do not read that she taught, which is an act of wisdom, or that she worked miracles, which is an act of a gratuitously given grace (*actus gratiae gratis datae*). Therefore, she did have the fullness of grace.

But contrary to this: The angel said to her, “Hail, full of grace” (Luke 1:28). In expounding this in *Sermone de Assumptione*, Jerome says, “‘Hail, full of grace.’ For grace was given to others in portions, whereas the fullness of grace poured into Mary all at once (*totam simul*).”

I respond: The closer that a thing approaches the principle in any genus, the more it participates in the effect of that principle. Hence, in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 4, Dionysius claims that angels, who are closer to God, participate more in divine goods than men do. But Christ is the principle of grace—by authority in His divine nature, and instrumentally in His human nature. Hence, John 1:17 says, “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Now the Blessed Virgin Mary was the closest of all to Christ in His human nature, since He received His human nature from her. And this is why it was fitting for her to obtain a greater fullness of grace than others.

Reply to objection 1: God gives grace to each individual in accord with the role for which that individual is chosen. And since Christ, insofar as He is a man, was predestined and chosen to be “the predestined Son of God ... in the power of sanctification” (Romans 1:4), it was peculiar to Him to have such a fullness of grace that it redounded upon everyone—this according to John 1:16 (“Of His fullness we have all received”).

On the other hand, the Blessed Virgin Mary received such a fullness of grace that she was closest of all to the author of grace, with the result that she received within herself the One who is full of every grace; and by giving birth to Him, she in a certain manner dispensed grace to everyone.

Reply to objection 2: In the case of natural things, there is first the perfection of the *disposition*, when the matter is perfectly disposed toward the form. Second, there is the perfection of the *form*, which is more excellent (*potior*), since the heat which itself comes from the form of fire is more perfect than the heat which disposes a thing toward the form of fire. And, third, there is the perfection of the *end*, as when fire has its qualities in the most perfect way, viz., when it reaches its own proper place.

And, similarly, in the case of the Blessed Virgin there is a threefold perfection of grace. The first is dispositive perfection, through which she is rendered fit to be the Mother of God, and this was the perfection of sanctification. The second perfection of grace existed in the Blessed Virgin because of the presence of the Son of God incarnated in her womb. The third perfection is the end, which she has in her glory.

Now the second perfection is more excellent than the first, and the third perfection is more excellent than the second.

This is clear, in one way, in her *liberation from evil*. For, first, in her sanctification she was liberated from original sin; second, in conceiving the Son of God she was totally liberated from the stimulant [to sin]; and, third, in her glorification she was likewise liberated from every sorrow.

It is clear, in a second way, in her *being ordered toward the good*. For, first, in her sanctification she acquired the grace that inclined her toward the good; second, when she conceived the Son of God, grace was consummated in her by confirming her in the good; and, third, in her glorification grace was consummated, perfecting her in the enjoyment of every good.

Reply to objection 3: It is not to be doubted that the Blessed Virgin received in a most excellent way, just as Christ did, the gift of wisdom and the grace of powers, and likewise the grace of prophecy. Yet she did not have all the *exercises (omnes usus)* of these and similar graces in the way that Christ did; instead, she had those exercises in a way that was appropriate to her condition.

For instance, she had the exercise of wisdom in contemplating—this according to Luke 2:19 (“Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart”). But she did not have the exercise of wisdom with respect to teaching, since this was not appropriate for her feminine sex—this according to 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I do not permit a woman to teach”).

Again, the exercise of miracles did not belong to her while she was living, since at that time it was the teaching of Christ that had to be confirmed by miracles, and so it was fitting for only Christ and his disciples, who were the bearers of Christ’s teaching, to work miracles. For this reason it is likewise said of John the Baptist that “he worked no sign” (John 10:41), in order that everyone might focus on Christ.

However, she did have the exercise of prophecy, as is clear from the canticle that she composed, “My soul magnifies the Lord ...” (Luke 1:46).

Article 6

Outside of Christ, was being sanctified in the womb peculiar to the Blessed Virgin?

It seems that, outside of Christ, being sanctified in the womb was peculiar to the Blessed Virgin:

Objection 1: It has been explained (a. 4) that the reason why the Blessed Virgin was sanctified in the womb was that she might be rendered fit to be the Mother of God. But this is peculiar to her. Therefore, she alone was sanctified in the womb.

Objection 2: Some individuals seem to have come closer to Christ than Jeremiah and John the

Baptist, who are said to have been sanctified in the womb. For instance, Christ is specifically called the Son of David and of Abraham, because of the promise made specifically to them concerning the Christ. Again, Isaiah prophesied about Christ in the most explicit way. Again, the apostles lived with Christ Himself. And yet we do not read that these individuals were sanctified in the womb. Therefore, neither was it fitting for either Jeremiah or John the Baptist to be sanctified in the womb.

Objection 3: In Job 31:18 Job says of himself, “From my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from the womb.” Yet we do not because of this claim that he was sanctified in the womb. Therefore, we are likewise forced to say that neither John the Baptist nor Jeremiah was sanctified in the womb.

But contrary to this: Jeremiah 1:5 says of Jeremiah, “Before you exited the womb, I sanctified you.” And Luke 1:15 says of John the Baptist, “He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.”

I respond: In *Epistola ad Dardanum* Augustine seems to speak with hesitation about the sanctification of [Jeremiah and John the Baptist] in the womb. For John’s leaping in the womb “could have been,” as he says, “a sign of the great reality”—viz., that a woman was the mother of God—“which was to be made known to his elders, though as yet it was unknown to the infant. Hence, the Gospel [Luke 1:44] does not say, ‘The infant *believed* in her womb,’ but that he ‘*leapt*’, and we see not only infants leap, but even animals. But this was unusual because it occurred in the womb. And so just as other miracles are wont to be done, this was done by God *in* the infant and not humanly *by* the infant. Although, perhaps, in the case of this child, the use of reason and will was accelerated to such an extent that, while yet in his mother’s womb, he was already able to acknowledge, believe, and consent—acts which, in the case of other children, one awaits the right age for them to be possible—and this, I think, would have to be counted among the miracles of the divine power.”

However, since in the Gospel it says explicitly, “He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,” and since it is said explicitly of Jeremiah, “Before you exited the womb, I sanctified you,” it seems that one should assert that they were sanctified in the womb, even though in the womb they did not have the exercise of free choice (which is the question raised by Augustine), just as children who are sanctified by baptism do not immediately gain the exercise of free choice. Yet one should not think that some others of whom Scripture does not make mention have been sanctified in the womb. For privileges involving this sort of grace, which are given to some individuals outside of the general rule, are ordered toward the welfare of others—this according to 1 Corinthians 12:7 (“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for its usefulness”)—but no usefulness would derive from the sanctification of individuals in the womb if it were not known to the Church.

And even though no reason can be assigned for God’s judgments, i.e., why He confers a given gift of grace on this individual and not on that one, it nonetheless seems fitting for both of the individuals in question to have been sanctified in the womb, in order to prefigure the sanctification to be effected by Christ. First, *through His passion*—this according to Hebrews 13:12 (“Jesus, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered outside the gates”). Jeremiah openly predicted this passion by words and symbols, and he explicitly prefigured it by his own sufferings. Second, *through baptism*: “... but you have been washed, but you have been sanctified ...” (1 Corinthians 6:11). John the Baptist prepared men for this baptism by his own baptism.

Reply to objection 1: The Blessed Virgin, who had been chosen by God as His Mother, obtained a more ample grace of sanctification than John the Baptist and Jeremiah, who were chosen to prefigure Christ in special ways. A sign of this is that it was granted to the Blessed Virgin that from then on she would not commit either a mortal or a venial sin, whereas it is believed that it was granted to the others that, with the protection of God’s grace, they would not commit a mortal sin,

Reply to objection 2: As regards other individuals, it was possible for there to be saints more closely conjoined to Christ than Jeremiah and John the Baptist were. However, as has been explained, the latter two were conjoined to Him more closely than anyone with respect to being explicit figures of His sanctification.

Reply to objection 3: The mercy of which Job is speaking is not the infused virtue, but a certain natural inclination to the act of that virtue.